

TOP TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NEW JERSEY'S ALTERNATE ROUTE PROGRAM

1. Take your praxis and pass as early as possible. You need to have passing scores before you graduate. This means you have to schedule, study, and allow four weeks for results. Do not wait until your last semester to take your tests.
2. Substitute Teach. As an alternate route candidate, experience is your biggest weakness. You need to prove that you are sure you want to teach and show you have experience in the classroom setting.
3. Get good grades. GPA Praxis flex testing allows you more leniencies in your scores if you get above a 3.5. But, you also get punished if your GPA is lower than a 2.75 but above a 2.5. Check out <http://www.state.nj.us/education/educators/license/gpa.htm>.
4. Graduate in the fall. You're against the clock if you graduate in the spring and are trying to get hired for the next year. In the summer, teacher certifications take 8-12 weeks to process.
5. Read books about teaching. The more you are familiar with the school system and teaching methods, the better off you are during an interview.
6. Minor in something useful. Show your versatility by minoring in a completely different subject, or minor in something that will compliment your major.
7. Do your research. Make sure you have the necessary credits in your major. Do not rely on your advisor to figure this out; they should be there to help you, not hold your hand.
8. Apply early. The application process is longer than you may think, and even more tedious. Do not give up. Find many sources and check them for postings daily.
9. Be prepared to pay the price. Praxis scores cost \$80.00 each with a yearly registration fee of roughly \$50.00. Applications for teaching certificates run almost \$200.00. It is not cheap to become licensed. You should be able to pay for this with money you make from substitute teaching.
10. Go the traditional education dual major route. Alternate route candidates are supposed to have job and life experience. School districts typically do not consider 22-year-old college graduates to have life experience. If you go the traditional route, you will beat an alternate route candidate fresh out of college any day. [Editor's note: Rowan also offers an MST program which leads to traditional certification so this could be considered instead of the double major]

— Kristopher Chiola
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